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ABSTRACT

This report profiles the condition of education in California's rural and small schools, placing public schooling and rurality into their social and economic contexts. The data focus on three issues: (1) the economic and social environments in which schools operate; (2) characteristics of rural schools, students, and teachers; and (3) school-improvement resources. California's counties are classified as rural, urban, mixed rural, or mixed urban. With more than 28 million people, California is the most populous state in the nation, with a broad ethnic mix. The state's population more than doubled between 1950 and 1980 and its economy is measurably strong. In 1988, the state's employment rate was 67%, slightly above the national average. In general, rural counties experience greater unemployment than urban counties. Rural schools made up 14.9% of the state's public schools, educating 8.5% of California's students in 1988. Rural schools are more homogenous than urban schools, but the rural student population is becoming more ethnically diverse. Because rural schools vary in size, economies of scale and allocating funds on a per-pupil basis work against rural schools for fixed operating costs. Attracting teachers to rural schools is difficult because of social isolation, lower salaries, limited mobility, and lack of personal privacy. California School Improvement Program (SIP) is a primary vehicle for rural school reform. SIP funds are used to improve curriculum, instruction, school climate, and school-community relations. The California School Leadership Academy offers a training program to address managerial, instructional, and curriculum leadership skills. (TES)

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ED325273

A DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC, AND EDUCATIONAL STATE PROFILE

1989

Rural Schools In CALIFORNIA

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

RC017819

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Rural Schools in California

A Demographic, Economic, And Educational State Profile 1989

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Patricia Brown
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Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development serves the four-state region of Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah, working with educators at all levels to plan and carry out school improvements. The mission of FWL's Rural Schools Assistance Program is to assist rural educators in the region by linking them with colleagues; sharing information, expertise and innovative practices; and providing technical assistance to build local capacity for continued self-improvement. For further information contact FWL, 1855 Folsom Street, San Francisco, California 94103, (415) 565-3000.

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Introduction

Generations of Americans have been educated in rural, small schools. Today, even as metropolitan areas expand, this tradition continues: 56 million people and three-fourths of the nation's school districts are in rural communities. But rural schools have changed. In contrast to a by-gone image, the norm now is a bustling student population, transit system, and modern facilities. As we approach the twenty-first century, even one-room rural schoolhouses are often flanked by a satellite dish.

Rural and small schools continue to demand our attention because they face issues similar to those in metropolitan areas. They have new immigrants, increasing budget constraints, gifted and special needs students, dropouts, substance abusers, and students with various achievement levels and occupational goals. Often the sparsity of population and paucity of professional service providers further complicates efforts to address these issues. But rural schools also have a long history of successfully providing quality education to children. They are filled with teachers, administrators, students, and volunteers whose creativity and commitment is illustrated by innovative curricula, integrated technology programs, provisions for students with special learning needs and interests, and an uncanny ability to do a lot with little.

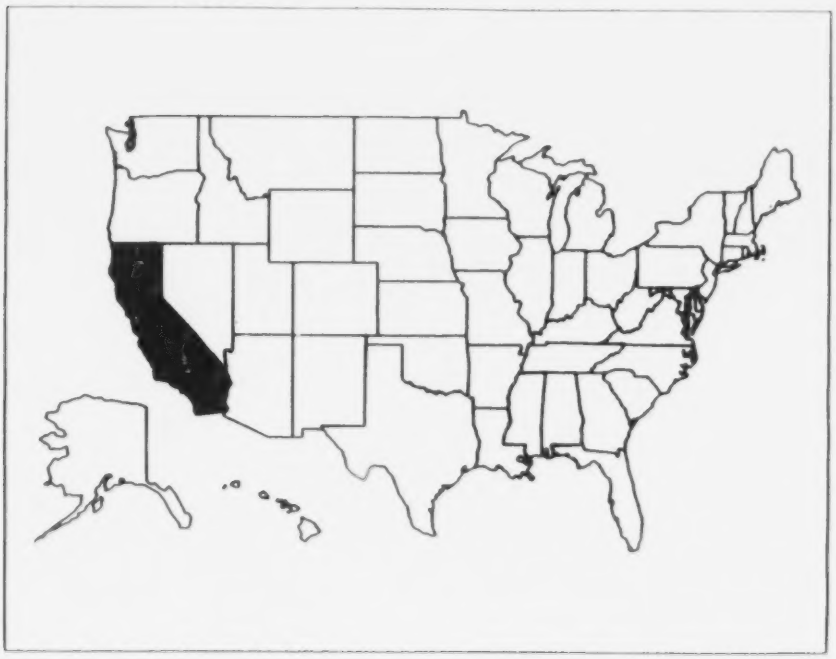
While urban areas are overwhelmed with the demands of providing quality education for all students, the magnitude of these demands also creates resources. Although these resources exist, they are still insufficient. In rural areas, the singularity of many demands coupled with the lack of economies of scale result in a dearth of resources.

Amid the changes taking place in California, rural and small schools continue to play a vital role in the education of the state's young people. California's population is growing rapidly, its ethnic composition is shifting, and its economy is one of the most expansive in the world. The workforce is young and enterprising, and jobs increasingly require higher levels of skill and education. These trends prevail throughout the Western region and are likely to have a sustained impact on California's future in both rural and urban areas (Albert, Hull and Sprague, 1989).

This state profile addresses the condition of education in California's rural and small schools. It places public schooling and rurality into their social and economic contexts.

We have used data compiled from primary sources, federal and state publications, survey research, policy papers, and discussion among professionals (See References). Unless otherwise specified, data are from 1988. Three key issues, presented in a state and nationwide context, form the focus of this profile: the economic and social

environments in which rural schools operate; characteristics of rural schools, students, and teachers; and school improvement resources. These issues are organized into chapters which identify significant demographic, economic, and educational changes and trends.



What is Rural? The Definition Problem

Educators, scholars, and policymakers have been unable to agree upon a common definition of "rural." Rurality is in the eye of the definer (Owens, 1980). It evokes images of sparsely populated small towns in agricultural regions or logging, mining, or fishing communities. These communities are often located far from a metropolitan area that provides essential goods and services. Rural communities are often characterized by a limited infrastructure and undiversified economy, and in the Western region by isolation, vast amounts of desert and forest, and a determination not to become "metropolitanized."

Translating these images into concrete definitions has proven to be difficult and subject to the specific needs and concerns of various stakeholders. By default, the term rural has come to mean areas characteristically different from urban and suburban areas—or, officially, "residual ineligible areas" (*Rural America in Passage*, 1982; Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1982; Department of the Interior, 1982). But which characteristics to consider? The federal standard for rural is all areas both within and outside Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas with a population fewer than 2,500 persons and fewer than 1,000 persons per square mile (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1983).

Rurality is in the eye of the definer.

Many rural educators consider this standard inadequate to describe their communities. While population and population density are major characteristics that define a community, other characteristics such as economic base, distance to essential goods and services, cultural institutions, and local history are also important.

In an attempt to clearly define "rural, small school district," a national team of administrators in the mid-1980s conducted an extensive review of current definitions of rural used by federal and state agencies, professional associations, scholars, and practitioners (Stephens and Turner, 1988). Not surprisingly, they found little agreement in these definitions, largely because criteria used were so different. Population density, size, isolation, distance to an urban area, occupational patterns, and sociocultural values all come into play—but with no consistency across definitions. Based upon what they learned, the administrators suggested definitions of their own:

1. A community is rural if it is a) either 25 miles or more from a city of 50,000 and not a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area or b) populated by 200 or fewer permanent residents per square mile.

2. A school district is rural if it exists within a rural community or in a county where 60 percent or more of the communities are rural.

3. A small school district has a student enrollment of 2,500 or less.

There is likewise no official California state definition of a rural, small school district. The State Department of Education makes no reference to rural schools and defines small school districts only in relation to funding formulas (California Education Code, Article 4, Sections 42280 - 42285, 1989). These definitions are:

- A necessary small school is an elementary school with an average daily attendance of less than 101, excluding seventh and eighth grade students attending a junior high school, if the district maintains two or more schools.

- A necessary small high school has an average daily attendance of less than 301, or is a junior high school with a ninth grade average daily attendance of less than 75.

- A small unified school district has an average daily attendance of less than 1,501.

Other characteristics often associated with small schools are topographical conditions such as hazardous or seasonal roads or more than five to ten miles distance from home to school along a well-traveled road.

Toward A Working Definition

Since the meaning of "rural" and "rural, small school district" is not clear, many educators solve the definition problem by being pragmatic: if the people served by a school district perceive themselves as residents of a rural area, then the school district is rural (National Rural Education Association, 1989; Stephens and Turner, 1988).

This "working definition" is, in part, the basis of Far West Laboratory's following state profile. However, because of the practical need for comparable data, this profile draws heavily upon county information. Based on population and other contextual information, counties were determined to be all urban, mixed urban, mixed rural, or primarily rural.

California's sociodemographic data, because it is voluminous and complicated, must be broken down to these levels. General principles used to determine these breakdowns are: 1) urban counties have a large central city and metropolitan area in which nearly the

entire population resides; 2) mixed urban counties have a large central city in which 75 percent or more of the population resides with the remaining population residing in small towns; 3) mixed rural counties have a total population of 200,000 or more and have a small to moderate sized central city; and 4) rural counties have a total population under 200,000 with most of the population residing in small towns.

CALIFORNIA COUNTIES

RURAL

Alpine	Imperial	Merced	Shasta
Amador	Inyo	Modoc	Sierra
Butte	Kings	Mono	Siskiyou
Calaveras	Lake	Napa	Sutter
Colusa	Lassen	Nevada	Tehama
Del Norte	Madera	Placer	Trinity
El Dorado	Mariposa	Plumas	Tuolumne
Glenn	Mendocino	San Benito	Yolo
Humboldt			Yuba

MIXED RURAL	**MIXED URBAN**	**URBAN**	
San Joaquin	Fresno	Alameda	San Bernardino
San Luis Obispo	Kern	Contra Costa	San Diego
Sonoma	Monterey	Los Angeles	San Francisco
Stanislaus	Santa Barbara	Marin	San Mateo
Tulare	Santa Cruz	Orange	Santa Clara
	Ventura	Riverside	Solano
		Sacramento	

This report will concentrate on the condition of education in these primarily rural counties. Where possible data will be aggregated to these levels to reveal a statistical portrait of rural California. While such an aggregation is not wholly satisfactory, it does allow for comparability across data from various sources while preserving a high degree of accuracy.

There is tremendous diversity among California's 34 counties determined to be rural for this report. Eight counties are clustered in the northern coastal and mountain region of the state. Their fishing, lumber, and recreation industries set them apart from the North Central Valley in which ten agricultural counties are located. Five other agricultural counties stretch from the Central Valley to the tip of Mexico. Along the base of the Sierra Foothills lie eight counties, some of which have become vacation communities and home to Sacramento commuters. Crossing the Sierras lie three eastern slope counties bordering Nevada.

California Rural Counties

Northern Coastal and Mountain

Del Norte
Humboldt
Lassen
Mendocino
Modoc
Trinity
Shasta
Siskiyou

North Central Valley

Butte
Colusa
Glenn
Lake
Napa
Plumas
Sutter
Tehama
Yolo
Yuba

Sierra Foothills

Amador
Calaveras
El Dorado
Mariposa
Nevada
Placer
Tuolumne

Eastern Slope

Alpine
Inyo
Mono
Sierra

Central Valley

Imperial
Kings
Madera
Merced
San Benito

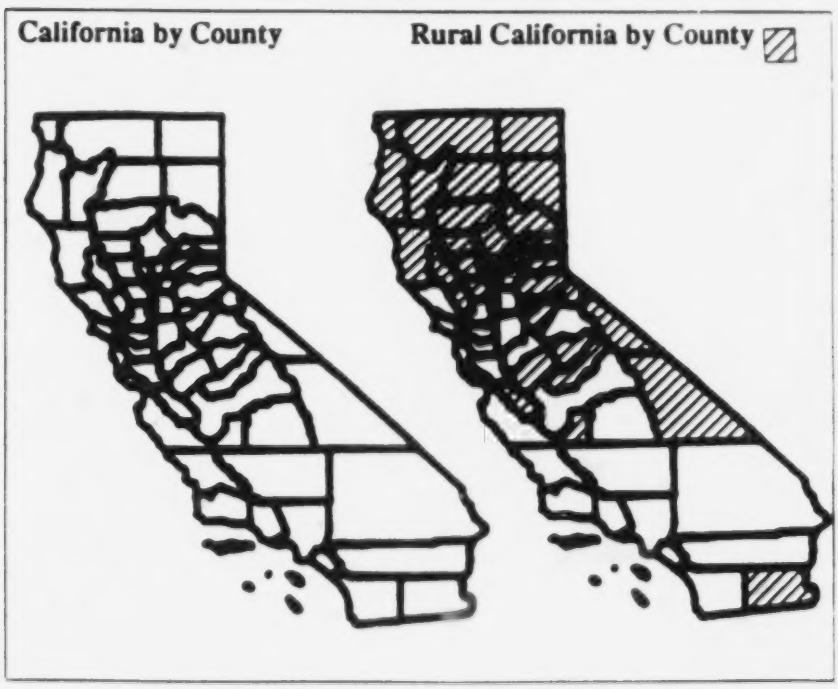
The State of California

Geography

California is a landscape filled with diversity and contrasts. The highest point in the contiguous states, Mount Whitney, is only 85 miles from the lowest—282 feet below sea level in Death Valley. In many parts of the state, the Pacific Ocean is just hours away from snow capped mountains and arid deserts. California is home to the world's largest, tallest, and oldest trees and the continent's highest waterfall.

The wild Pacific coastline in the north becomes more contoured in the south, creating bays, headlands, and natural harbors. Most of the state's major metropolitan areas are located along or in close proximity to the coast. Parallel to the coastline stretches a mountain range whose gentle slopes grow redwood and oak in the north-central region and chaparral to the south. From the northeast, running half the length of the state, towers the Sierra Nevada. Its serrated crest and escarpment of nearly 10,000 feet above the eastern valleys contrast the pine and fir forests, alpine lakes, and wildflower meadows of the western slope. Between the Coastal and Sierra mountain ranges lies the nation's leading agricultural region, the Central Valley. A barren desert covers the southeastern corner of the state.

Encompassing a land area of 156,000 square miles, California is the third largest state in the nation. The federal government owns 46.2 percent of the state's lands.



The People

Since the gold rush in the mid-nineteenth century, people from all over the world have been lured to California. One in nine Americans are Californians, making it by far the most populous state in the nation.

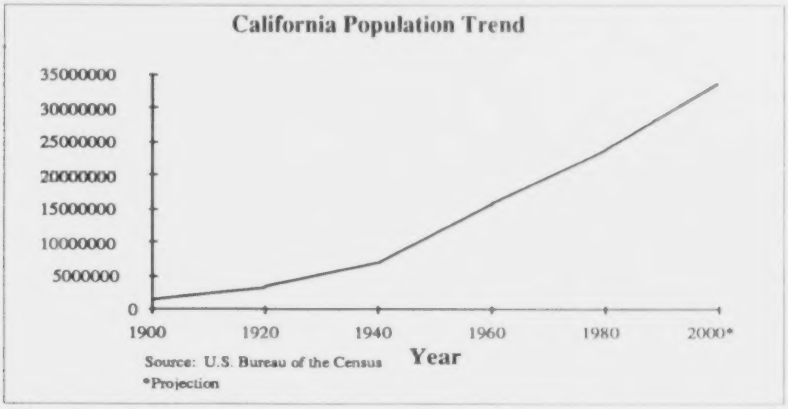
Reeling from one population boom to another during the last half century, California's population more than doubled between 1950 and 1980, grew another 20 percent since then, and is projected to increase another 15 percent between 1990 and the end of the century. The percent change in population between 1980 and 1988 is 19.6 percent, ranking fifth in the nation. This trend is attributable to the state's high birth rate and very high in-migration. California welcomed more than 2.5 million new residents during this period.

Reeling from one population boom to another during the last half century ... more than 28 million people reside in California.

Percent Increase in State Population 1980-1988

National Rank	State	Percent
1.	Nevada	31.7
2.	Alaska	30.5
3.	Arizona	28.4
4.	Florida	26.6
5.	**California**	**19.6**
National Average		8.5

More than 28 million people reside in California. Over 95 percent of this population lives in a metropolitan area. Despite this concentration, rural areas are growing at a slightly faster rate. From 1986 to



1988, the urban counties grew at a rate of 2.4 percent while the rural counties grew at the faster pace of 3.2 percent, continuing a trend begun in the early 1970s.

The population density in urban counties approaches 500 persons per square mile. In the San Francisco metropolitan area, the most densely populated area in the state, there are more than 14,600 persons per square mile. In contrast, the population density of rural California is 25.5 persons per square mile. In rural Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa, and Sierra Counties, no one lives in an urbanized area.

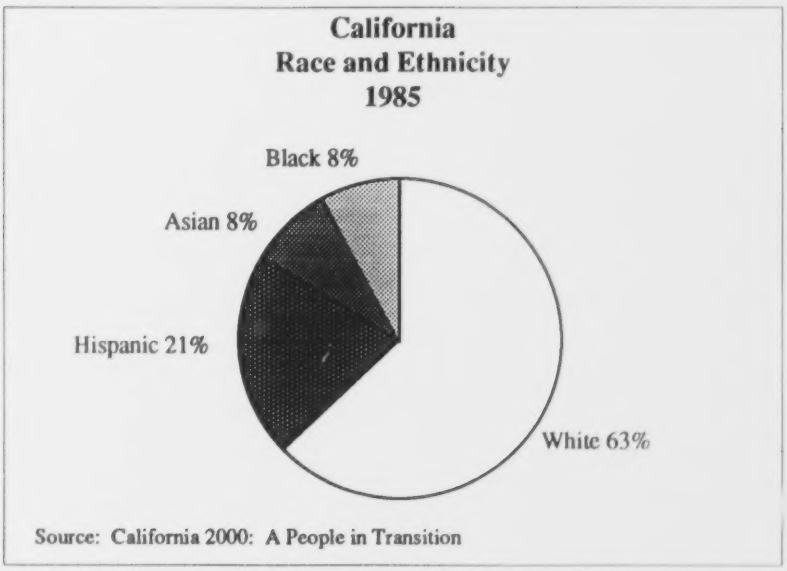
While California's unparalleled growth has affected urban areas most dramatically, it has also profoundly changed the character of many previously rural areas. The San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles Basin, and San Diego have all spread eastward into surrounding counties, transforming vast orchards, fields, and vineyards into housing developments. What were once small towns like Lodi and Temecula are now bedroom communities as affordable housing gets harder to find. This population expansion has reached the Central Valley where Sacramento and Fresno are broadening their girths into surrounding communities.

California has long been mythologized as the land where fortunes are made and dreams come true. The earliest Californians were Indians. Then came the Spanish explorers and missionaries. With their arrival, the Indians were decimated by foreign diseases and evicted from their homelands. By the mid-nineteenth century, when gold was discovered in the American River, one of California's largest and most frenzied migrations took place—the gold rush. As gold fever spread, new settlements sprang up and San Francisco thrived as the hub of goods and services. But the gold boom went bust, and the new residents looked for stability and settled into business, industry, and agriculture.

While unparalleled growth has affected urban areas most dramatically, it has also profoundly changed the character of many previously rural areas.

During the early twentieth century, another wave of migration occurred with the discovery of oil and introduction of the automobile and film industry. Farmers from the dustbowl states, Blacks from the South, and laborers from Asia and Mexico all came to California in search of a better life. During the boom of the 1950s and 1960s, California prepared for population growth by building freeways, prisons, schools, water projects, and other facilities to meet future needs. Since then, with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, local services have suffered. Coupled with the Gann county tax limits and federal cutbacks, there has been an increased burden on public facilities. As a result, schools have become increasingly dependent upon the state for funding. Rural areas are particularly hard hit because of inadequate local tax bases, tight county budgets, and increasing demands.

Yet the search for a better life has brought millions of ethnic immigrants to California in the 1980s alone. In 1970, 78 percent of the population was White, 7 percent Black, 12 percent Hispanic and 3 percent Asian. By 1985, the White population fell to 63 percent, the Black population slightly increased to 8 percent, the Hispanic population nearly doubled to 21 percent, and the Asian population jumped to 8 percent (*California 2000: A People in Transition*, 1986). By the year 2000, the state population is projected to be a minority-majority. This shift has already occurred in the K-12 public schools, since the ethnic populations are younger and growing more rapidly than the rest of the population.



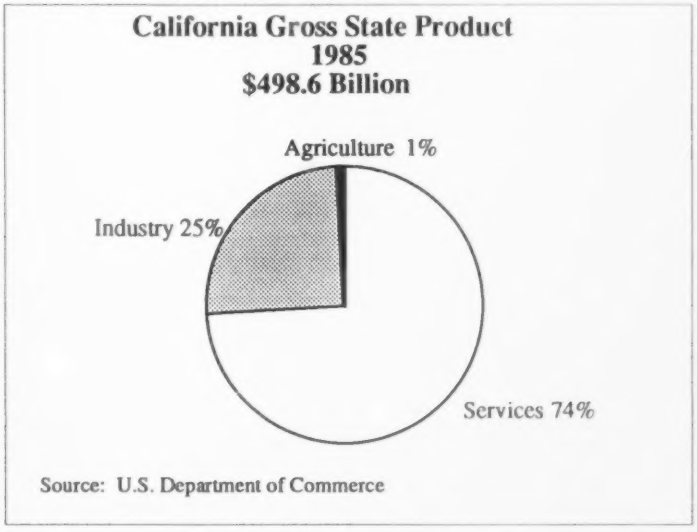
By the year 2000, the state population is projected to be a minority-majority.

Fifteen percent of the state's population is foreign born. While California has been described as a state of many states, it has also be described as a state of many countries. Nearly one fourth of all immigrants coming to the United States in 1981 settled in California, and this trend has continued throughout the decade. Each month the state welcomes 3,500 immigrants from Southeast Asia and an additional 1,400 Southeast Asians from other states. In 1988 alone, California received nearly 1.5 million applications from mostly Mexican, Central American, and Asian immigrants seeking amnesty. This is more than half of all immigrants seeking amnesty in the United States.

Although California has the fifth highest birth rate in the nation and more than 8 percent of the population under age five, it is only a moderately youthful state compared to trends occurring in other states. In fact, it has been described as the mecca for the middle-aged and the quintessential baby boomer state (Hodgkinson, 1986). Only five other states have a higher percentage of population between the ages of 25 and 44.

The Economy

If California was a nation it would rank among the ten leading countries in goods and services produced. Its total economic production is higher than any other state, reaching a gross state product of almost $500 billion.



If California was a nation it would rank among the ten leading countries in goods and services produced.

The state economy benefits greatly from its extraordinary natural resources and location for international trade. With the rise of the Pacific Rim as the growth center for the global economy has come an increased value of manufactured exports, topping $85 million in California in 1984. Service industries, located mostly in metropolitan areas and catering to the annual 100 million tourists, account for 74 percent of the gross state product. Manufacturing goods such as electrical and transportation equipment, food products, apparel, and printed material earn more than $94 billion annually. California's 79,000 farms, averaging 415 acres in size, lead the nation in farm income. They produce half the nation's fruits, nuts, and vegetables and a large proportion of nursery products, milk, and livestock. Although lumbering, fisheries, and mineral industries account for only 1 percent of the gross state product, they are the leading employers in many rural areas of the state.

California's employment rate in 1988 was 67 percent, slightly above the national average of 66 percent. The state's rural economy was more vulnerable than its urban economy between the years 1980 and 1987. Only four counties experienced a decrease in percent employed, and all were rural. Two of the counties, Glenn and Imperial, rely heavily on agriculture. On the other hand, seven rural counties increased their percent employed by more than one third. Most of

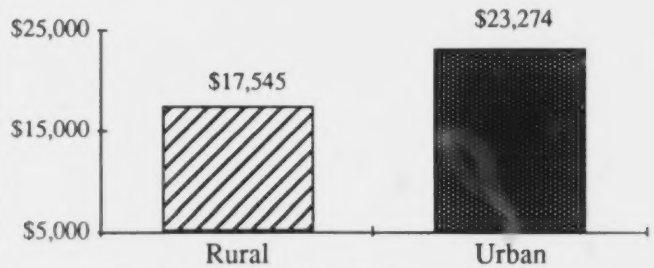
these counties, like Napa and Nevada, have either become bedroom communities for sprawling urban areas or vacation areas in the Sierra foothills. With the exception of San Francisco, which had a very modest increase, all urban counties experienced a 15 to 40 percent increase during the same period.

In general, residents in rural counties experience greater unemployment than those in urban areas. Reliance on farming, fisheries, and lumber are more precarious than the relatively stable urban service and trade economies. In 1986, the average unemployment rate in rural counties was 10.6 percent, twice the rate of urban counties (5.2 percent). Nearly half (47.1 percent) of all rural counties experienced between a 10 and 15 percent rate of unemployment. Imperial County, with its large Hispanic and limited-English speaking population and agriculture economy, had more than four times the rate of unemployment as Los Angeles or San Francisco and twice that of the rural average (23.9 percent).

California's annual per capita income ranks seventh nationally, at $19,139. For more than a decade, the per capita income of rural residents has been significantly lower than for urban residents. In 1987, the average income for a rural resident was $13,591 and $19,770 for an urban resident. Rural Yuba County reported the state's lowest annual per capita income at under $11,000. In addition to earning less money, rural residents have experienced a smaller percent increase in per capita income than urban residents since 1980.

The 1980 average annual median family income in rural counties was $17,545, considerably less than the $23,274 average in urban counties. In five rural counties, about one third of the residents earned less than $10,000 annually.

California
Median Family Income: Average by Rural and Urban Counties
1980



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Poverty is both an urban and rural problem.

While poverty is both an urban and rural problem, it hit some rural areas particularly hard. In 1979, in San Benito, Yuba, Glenn, and eight other rural counties, more than one in ten families lived in poverty. Alpine County experienced the most intense rate of poverty, with nearly one in five families impoverished (18.1 percent). By 1985, 13.6 percent of the state's population lived in poverty. Given the demographic trends of the 1980s, California is increasingly becoming a two-tiered society, with an Anglo-Asian overclass and mostly Black and Hispanic underclass.

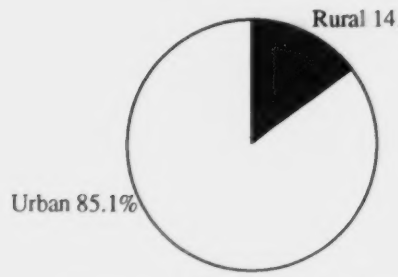
California's Rural Schools, Students, and Teachers

By any measure, California's school system is large and diverse. Rural schools are an important part of this mix.

Characteristics of Rural Schools

The state of California is divided into 58 counties and 1,024 school districts (California State Department of Education, 1989).[1] In 1988, there were 1,064 schools in California's rural areas organized into 412 districts. These 722 elementary schools, 92 middle schools, and 250 high schools make up 14.9 percent of the state's 7,147 public schools. Of these, 60 schools are for special education, 13 for juvenile delinquents, and two for pregnant minors. Ten rural schools, like Big Pine School on the Owens River and Pliocene Ridge School at the base of the Sierras, serve students from grades K-12.

Percent Rural and Urban Schools In Califronia, 1988



Source: California State Department of Education

Throughout the 1980s, the statewide trend in student enrollment has been one of rapid increase, particularly in the primary grades. Currently, California schools serve more than 5 million students and projections suggest that during the next decade public school enrollments will increase from 120,000 to 150,000 annually (*Conditions of Children in California*, 1988).

Except for a few remote rural counties, the statewide trend in student enrollment has been one of rapid increase.

While this trend impacts the urban counties most dramatically in terms of sheer numbers of students, some rural districts are growing at a tremendous rate. San Benito topped the rural counties with nearly a 30 percent increase in enrollment as it becomes a rural haven for Silicon Valley and Monterey Peninsula workers. Likewise, counties near sprawling Sacramento have become bedroom communities

[1]Sources disagree about the exact number of school districts in California. Differences are attributed to the number of special schools included in the count and the discrepancies in other reports is unclear. The range varies from 1,008 school districts to 1,157.

for commuters. Rural Calaveras (27.4 percent), Lake (26.9 percent), Nevada (23.9 percent) and Colusa (20.6 percent) Counties experienced more than a 20 percent increase in enrollment from 1980 to 1986.

During this same period, while the overall enrollment of rural students increased at a more moderate rate of 7.4 percent, seven remote, rural counties experienced a decline in enrollment. Alpine County's student enrollment dropped to under 200 in 1986, a decline of 29.8 percent since 1980. The other counties with decreasing enrollment were located primarily along the eastern slope of the Sierras or in the mountains near the Oregon border.

The size of school districts in California range tremendously. Los Angeles Unified School District, for example, enrolls nearly 600,000 students, almost 15 percent of the state's public school population. The 13 most urban counties concentrated in the San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego metropolitan areas enroll over 3 million of the state's 4.5 million public school students. In contrast, the 34 rural counties enroll less than 8.5 percent of the state's students.

California's small school districts are not necessarily located in rural areas. While it is not uncommon for urban schools to exceed an enrollment of 1,000, 116 urban districts have an enrollment of fewer than 2,500. Few urban districts, however, are very small. There are 247 rural districts with fewer than 1,000 students and nearly 40 percent of all rural districts are one-school districts. Of Humboldt County's 32 districts, for example, 21 operate only one school.

The size of rural schools vary from just a few students to several hundred. Half of all rural schools have fewer than 250 students. There are 173 schools with less than 50 students, another 185 with 50 to 100 students, and 180 rural high schools with fewer than 300 students. The modal elementary school in the state enrolls between 500 and 600 students and the modal secondary school enrolls between 600 and 700 students (*Conditions of Children in California*, 1988). In isolated areas, entire schools can be the size of one urban class. For example, Death Valley Unified School District has three schools, each of which has fewer than 30 students.

Many rural superintendents serve as school principals and many rural principals serve at multiple school sites or as principal-teachers.

Each rural county has a superintendent of schools as does each district. In rural areas, administrators often assume multiple roles. In 1988, the Mariposa and Plumas County superintendents additionally served as district superintendents. More than 200 district superintendents also served as school principals. In Trinity County, for example, all 11 superintendents are also principals, many of whom additionally teach. Another 14 rural superintendents are multi-school principals. The superintendent-principal of Millville Elementary School District commutes more than 30 windy miles to also staff

the Oak Run Elementary School District near the summit of Hatchet Mountain. Many principals in California's rural schools also serve as multi-school principals or as principal-teachers. In Modoc Joint Unified School District, one principal serves four schools, another principal serves three, another two, and only two principals serve one school. Administrators with multiple roles attend to personnel issues, school finance, instructional leadership, and curriculum enrichment, each of which is equally important to the smooth functioning of the school.

Some rural schools are not only small, they are remote. Remoteness in California can mean that a school is more than 100 mountain or desert miles from a central administration office, or that some students have to travel for more than an hour on a school bus each way, or that neighboring schools cannot be reached during the winter months because of hazardous road conditions. Since Alpine County does not have a secondary school, students on the western slope of the Sierras attend high school in Calaveras County and those on the eastern slope attend across the border in Nevada. There are also 32 one-teacher schools operating in remote areas throughout the state. Three are located in the Humboldt County towns of Blue Lake, Korbel, and Kneeland, two in Placer and Siskiyou Counties, and the rest in small mountain, coastal, and desert towns.

Many rural schools successfully offer a comprehensive elementary and secondary curriculum. They may also have supporting facilities and services such as a gymnasium, library and librarian, workshop and shop instructor, and computer laboratory. But the smaller the school, the more remote its location, and the poorer the district, the more likely its curricula, facilities, and services will be limited. Alternative arrangements such as itinerant services, shared facilities, employment of paraprofessionals, multi-school principals, and administrator-teachers are attempts to overcome this paucity of resources. Future use of telecommunications also promises potential for diversifying curricular offerings in California's rural schools. Despite these efforts, rural educators are often hard-pressed or unable to offer all courses every year that are required for high school graduation or college entrance. With the current wave of performance accountability, teachers and administrators in many rural areas are finding it difficult to keep up with increased graduation requirements and to implement new curricula.

Economies of scale work against rural schools for fixed operating costs and when funding allocations are on a per pupil basis.

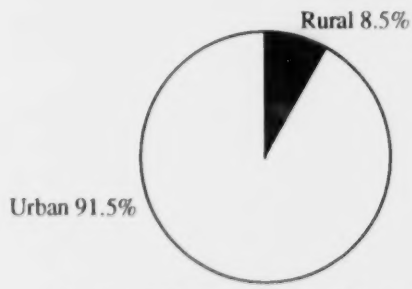
Equitable financing of rural and urban schools is difficult to attain. Economies of scale work against rural schools for fixed operating costs and when funding allocations are on a per pupil basis. Rural schools are rarely able to generate the critical mass of funding necessary to purchase, for example, a satellite dish or hire a trigonometry or music teacher. Equal or greater dollars per rural pupil still cannot

buy what urban districts can because of their much larger student population. This is compounded in many rural areas where local tax revenues and property wealth lag behind urban areas.

Characteristics of Rural Students

Rural schools educated 383,529 students, or 8.5 percent of the state's 4.5 million students in 1988. This number is expected to increase well into the early twenty-first century as demographic trends suggest there will be continued movement to many rural counties and growing numbers of migrant families entering and leaving the agricultural regions. In this process, some rural counties may become urbanized.

Percent Rural and Urban Students In California, 1988



Source: U.S. Department of Education

Compulsory school attendance in California is from age six to 16. Kindergarten is not compulsory but is offered in all elementary and unified districts and at nearly all (92.7 percent) rural elementary schools.

Nearly three-fourths of the rural student population is Caucasian (72.2 percent). Rural Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Modoc, Napa, and Nevada Counties have a very small number of minority students. This is in contrast to urban schools which have a minority-majority, with 54.2 percent of the students from a racial or ethnic minority group. Hispanics are the largest minority group among rural students (19.4 percent). Imperial and Merced Counties, followed by other agricultural counties like Kings and Madera, have the highest concentration of Hispanic students. These counties are also the seasonal home to a high proportion of the state's more than 170,000 migrant students. Thirty percent of the state's Native American students attend rural schools and live mostly in the northern coastal and mountain counties. Less than 6 percent of rural students are Asian (3.6 percent) or Black (2.1 percent).

California Race and Ethnicity
Rural Schools, 1988

White	72.2%
Hispanic	19.4%
Asian	3.6%
Native American	2.7%
Black	2.1%

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Although rural schools are more homogeneous than those in urban areas, California's school children are increasingly characterized by differing racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups. Throughout the state, 27 percent of the public school students speak a primary language other than English. About half have limited-English proficiency and half are fluent English speakers. Between 1984 and 1987, the number of limited-English proficient students increased 25 percent. Most of these students are enrolled in the elementary grades (69 percent), and most speak Spanish as their primary language (73.3 percent). During the same period, students whose primary language is Farsi increased 87 percent; those whose primary language is Cambodian increased 86 percent; and those who speak Hmong increased 67 percent (Language Census Report, 1987).

While nearly three-fourths of the limited-English proficient students are enrolled in six urban counties (Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara), rural schools have students with special language needs as well. Almost 5 percent of the state's 613,224 limited-English speaking students attend rural schools. These 28,605 students are concentrated in Imperial, Merced, Yolo, Madera, and Kings Counties, and receive some specialized instruction from bilingual, cross-cultural teachers and aides. Seven other rural counties, some with more than 200 limited-English speaking students, have no credentialed specialized staff and rely exclusively on aides. In the nine rural counties where no specialized staffing is employed, there are less than 20 limited-English speakers in the schools.

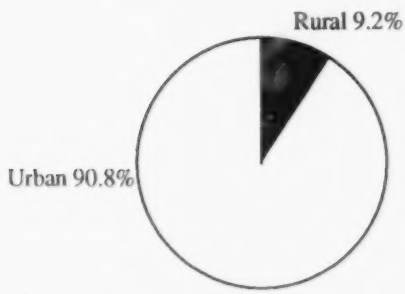
While poverty among rural students is not new to the schools, it has become more apparent in the late 1980s. Social service workers are aware that plenty of school age children are not attending school due to transiency and poverty. During the 1986-1987 school year, the

families of more than one in four students attending school in Merced County and nearly one in five students attending schools in rural Alpine, Butte, and Modoc Counties received Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC). In 11 other rural counties, more than 13 percent of students' families received AFDC.

Characteristics of Rural Teachers

More than 17,500, or 9.2 percent of the state's 191,394 teachers staff California's rural schools. Attracting teachers to rural schools is often

Percent Rural and Urban Teachers In California, 1988

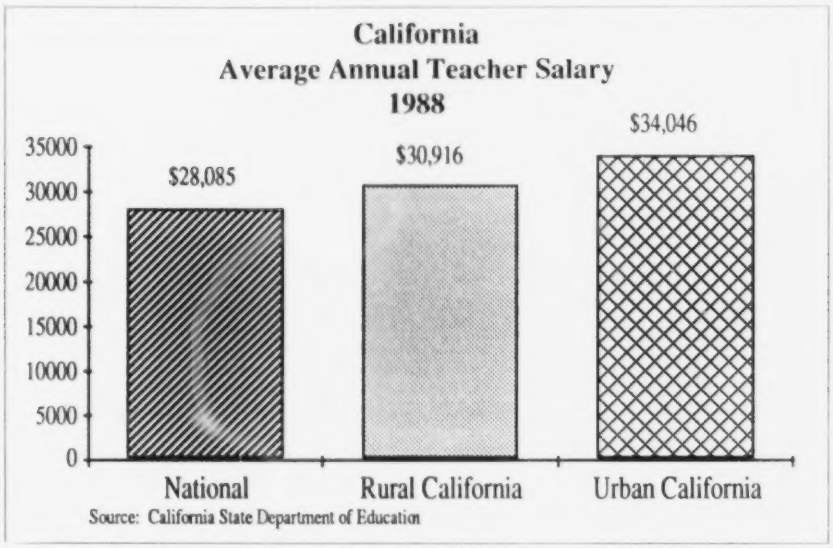


Source: California State Department of Education

Attracting and retaining rural teachers is often difficult.

difficult because of social and cultural isolation, lower salaries, limited mobility, and lack of personal privacy (Miller and Sidebottom, 1985). It is even more difficult to retain teachers in remote schools than it is to attract them. Occasionally a position remains unfilled and either a substitute or principal will teach. This is becoming an increasingly difficult problem as California faces a statewide teacher shortage. Even small districts are forced to advertise nationwide and send recruiters to such far away places as Michigan, Ohio, and Virginia.

The average annual salary of California's rural teachers in 1988 was $30,916, more than $3,000 less than urban teachers who earn an average annual salary of $34,046. In eight rural counties, teachers earned less than an average annual salary of $30,000 while those in four urban counties exceeded $35,000. Nationwide the average annual teacher salary is $28,085.



Class sizes in rural counties tend to be smaller. The average teaching load for rural teachers was 21 students in 1987, compared to the slightly higher 23 students in urban counties. Alpine County has the smallest class sizes with an average of 15 students for every teacher.

Teaching responsibilities may be greater in rural schools.

While classes may be smaller, teaching responsibilities may be greater in rural schools. The role of the multi-grade teacher, either at a one-teacher school or at a school with fewer teachers than grade levels, stretches beyond those normally performed by teachers. Teachers in rural, small schools need to be competent generalists, with an ability to individualize instruction, carry on multiple activities, sequence curricular skills across grade levels and content areas, and sometimes assume the non-instructional role of janitor or nurse (Scott, 1986). In general, rural teachers also have less access to collegial sharing and exchanging of resources than urban teachers do.

Rural School Improvement

School improvement is the pursuit of any goal that benefits students or teachers and has as its primary focus the classroom or the school (Askin and Schwisow, 1989). In the past decade, school improvement most commonly referred to a specific set of research-based process models which guide schools through a multi-stage effort to strengthen performance and attain specific outcomes. Typically these processes focus on schoolwide plans and activities, including shaping the school's culture, creating a vision of instructional excellence, strengthening the curriculum, and establishing a school's mission and goals. Other more conventional approaches to improving schools through individual training have continued throughout this period as well. These staff development activities often address specific instructional and managerial techniques for teachers and administrators.

Improving rural and small schools poses significant challenges. Rural schools are hampered by inadequate resources because of small tax revenues and the relatively low apportionment of state and federal funds, small administrative and support staff, and scarcity of support services due to distance from resource agencies such as central administrative offices and universities. Despite these impediments, rural schools continue to seek ways to improve the process of education and the outcome of schooling.

This section reviews some of the major statewide and regional school improvement programs available to rural educators in California. Included are both process-based models and individual training models since they are both necessary to improve the quality of schools.

The California Experience

In California, school improvement activities are available to rural educators through state, county, and local education agencies. The California State Department of Education is the primary source of funding and technical support for improvement activities throughout the state. Each of the County Offices of Education provides technical assistance and staff development training. Co-sponsored with County Offices of Education and local districts, the 19 campuses of the California State University offer an array of preservice and in-service school improvement activities.

California State Department of Education (CSDE)

One of the main vehicles for implementing school-based reform efforts is the California School Improvement Program (SIP). Sponsored by the CSDE since 1977, it is designed to assist local schools and communities to strengthen their ability to improve the quality of

education. SIP school councils, composed of school and community leaders, set the reform agenda to best meet the needs of local students. During the 1989-1990 school year, nearly 90 percent of the state's elementary students and about 20 percent of secondary students participated in SIP activities.

There are few restrictions on how schools can use SIP funds, although plans must be approved by the district and the CSDE. Generally the monies are used to assess schoolwide instructional programs, identify areas needing improvement, and develop processes or programs to achieve intended goals. SIP activities focus on improving curricular content, instruction, school climate, and school-community relations. All SIP activities are evaluated through an internal and external review process.

Since fundamental school improvement occurs in the classroom, the CSDE has also supported a process of developing and implementing model curriculum standards and curriculum frameworks. Throughout the mid-1980s, workshops were conducted to establish a shared vision of excellence and ways in which teachers could implement the curricula reform in the classroom. The One-Two-Three Plan, established by the CSDE, helps districts facilitate the six year framework and instructional materials adoption cycle. This cycle is more difficult to carry out in small, rural districts in which staff are already attending to multiple administrative and instructional roles.

Supporting this curricula reform and other school improvement efforts is the CSDE sponsored Mentor Teacher Program. Teachers in urban and rural districts are selected to be instructional leaders in their districts. Their primary role is to develop curriculum, conduct inservice training for novice and veteran teachers, and assist teachers in instructional strategies.

Coupled with teacher and curricula reform is the CSDE's support of the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA). Premised on the notion that effective school change needs strong school leadership, CSLA tailors its training program to address managerial, instructional, and curriculum leadership skills. Training is provided at nine regional Administrative Training Centers (ATCs). Five ATCs are located in areas that support mostly rural administrators.

The CSLA training cycle is a three-year, interrelated series of workshops and activities. The first year consists of research-based workshops on topics such as professional accountability, school climate, and organizational change. The second year focuses on follow-through support activities, and the final year requires the development of a comprehensive school improvement project.

County Offices of Education

County Offices of Education serve as intermediate agencies between the CSDE and local districts. Since the majority of school improvement funds are provided by the CSDE and channeled directly to requesting schools, the county offices assist schools in implementing site-based improvement programs. County assistance ranges from offering inservice workshops for teachers, administrators, and aides to helping school boards set educational goals, instructional objectives, and evaluations. Some county offices, like the Tehama County Department of Education, coordinate a special School Improvement and Economic Impact Aid Cooperative using Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 monies.

The California State University (CSU)

The CSU is extensively involved in both teacher preparation and school improvement activities. Together its 19 campuses, located in both rural and urban areas, prepare more than 80 percent of all beginning teachers in California and about 10 percent nationwide.

The CSU works closely with local schools. It offers preservice programs for rural residents through interactive technology as well as technical assistance and inservice workshops on topics such as child development, working with diverse student populations, identifying and assisting students at-risk, and counseling. Special programs to assist rural educators are in place at many CSU campuses. CSU Chico, for example, is working in consortium with the Colusa County Office of Education and Butte Community College to provide better training of bilingual classroom paraprofessionals.

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